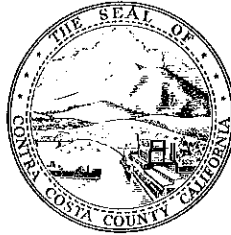


Tom Torlakson

Supervisor, District Five
Contra Costa County
Board of Supervisors



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September 17, 1993

Delta Protection Commission
P.O. Box 530
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

Dear Commissioners:

As a follow-up thought to the Recreation and Conservancy presentations in previous meetings, I believe we can position the Delta for consideration of a major funding recipient of the next state open space and park bonds issue. For access and recreation facilities as well as for conservancy projects, our commission's efforts could be instrumental in securing significant funding through such a measure.

Please note the attached article regarding the currently proposed bond measure. The measure pioneers the kind of conservancy partnership some commissioners have expressed a desire to explore and pursue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Torlakson".

Tom Torlakson, Chair
Delta Protection Commission

TT:gro

Attachment

cc: Board of Supervisors
Margit Aramburu, Executive Director
Delta Protection Commission

Unusual coalition assists parks bond

Staff and wire reports

MODESTO — A bond initiative that would raise \$2 billion for parks and open space has been boosted by an unusual link between farmers and environmentalists in the Central Valley.

Called the state parks initiative or CALPAW '94, short for California for Parks and Wildlife, the plan would lock up thousands of acres in open space, including Central Valley farmlands. The initiative would also generate more than \$80 million for Bay Area projects, including \$10 million to expand Mt. Diablo State Park and \$30 million for East Bay Regional Park holdings.

The initiative includes a provision to spend \$97 million to pay Central Valley farmers to not sell their lands for subdivisions — a Central Valley first.

"People want to protect the open spaces," said Erik Vink, the California field representative of the American Farmland Trust. "Farmland is open space and environmentalists are now starting to realize that keeping farms as farms can be habitat protection as well."

Lynn Sadler, a resource director for the Planning and Conservation League, which is sponsoring the initiative, agreed that the alliance is

unusual. "But we are working to make it not so unusual," she said.

"You need to form these alliances if you want to get anything done these days," Vink said.

If the initiative is approved, farmers or ranchers could sell their development rights, called development easements, to a county agency created under the initiative.

If the land met the habitat or buffer-zone criteria, the trust would pay the qualified farmers for the land, based on the per-acre or total value of the land to developers, minus its value as farmland.

So, if the land is worth \$2,000 an acre as farmland and \$10,000 an acre as a subdivision or mall site, the trust would pay the farmer \$8,000 an acre for the rights, Sadler said.

But the farmer keeps title to the land. The land cannot be developed, although the owner can sell the land, most likely at the reduced easement price.

Third generation Merced County farmer Don Robinson thinks the bond initiative might be a good idea.

The Gold Rush lured his grandfather to California, Robinson said. He first settled as a miner near Mariposa in the middle 1800s and soon realized he could make more money selling food to the miners than working alongside them.